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# BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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THE WOMAN WITH THE MIRROR  
(LA BELLE IRLANDAISE)  
BY GUSTAVE COURBET

## THE GUSTAVE COURBET CENTENARY EXHIBITION

WHEN this number of the BULLETIN appears, the Courbet Centenary Exhibition will have opened to the public. The private view for members and their friends was held on Monday afternoon, April 7, from two until six o'clock, and the public exhibition began on the following morning. It will be continued until May 18.

Among the striking pictures which are shown in the Museum are the two portraits

lent by The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which are of particular interest to students of the master's career, as they illustrate in such a clear manner the development which took place in his style—a development that the art of the last half of the nineteenth century exactly paralleled. The first of these portraits is of Courbet's friend, Urbain Cuenot, the mayor of his native town, Ornans, painted in 1846 or 1847, when the artist was about twenty-seven. It shows the dense shadows which Courbet borrowed from his prototypes, the great real-

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ists of the seventeenth century, men like Caravaggio or Spagnoletto. This portrait was a preliminary painting for the figure of Cuenot that appears in *The Funeral at Ornans* (now in the Louvre), an immense composition of forty figures, each one a portrait. This work, together with the *Stone Breakers* (Dresden Museum) and *Peasants of Flagey Returning from the Fair* (sold at auction in New York several years ago), were the most talked-of pictures at the Salon of 1850-51, the birth-date of the realistic school of the nineteenth century.

The other is the portrait of a Madame Frood who, judging from her costume, was a woman of the Franche-Comté. The exact date of this painting is not known, but it could with certainty be placed between 1865 and 1870. In it is evident the tendency toward full light and simple effect that painting was soon to take on; it has, in fact, a resemblance to the style that Manet was evolving at the same time. The two pictures were given to the Pennsylvania Academy by the painter, Mary Cassatt, whose appreciation of the greatness of Courbet has had important results on his representation in American collections.

The *Woman with the Mirror*, *La Belle Irlandaise*, lent anonymously, is among those pictures that will be generally admired as one of the most masterly and charming of the exhibition. In this work, Courbet has been carried away by the loveliness of the sitter; he has painted her mass of copper-colored hair and her strong, sensitive hands with an evident admiration that was rare in his generally impersonal outlook. The same quality is found in *The Woman with the Parrot*, of the same year. *La Belle Irlandaise* was Whistler's companion and famous model, Jo, after whom *The White Girl* and *The Little White Girl* were painted, and who appears in so many of his paintings and etchings. She and Whistler spent the summer of 1865 at Trouville with Courbet. *The Woman with the Mirror* was painted at that time or shortly after, as it is dated 1866. Another painting of the same period is *The Isolated Rock*, which likewise shows that

Courbet, with all his brutal strength, could appreciate exquisiteness; in this case, the mother-of-pearl tints in the late afternoon sky could not be more tenderly painted. One might think that companionship with the delicate and sensitive Whistler had tempered his ruggedness, at the same time that the example of Courbet's overwhelming genius was developing and forcing the art of Whistler.

Lack of space prevents any detailed mention of the pictures; all could be commented upon and praised. The exhibition will make evident to its visitors the high place which Courbet occupies in the hierarchy of great artists—a place which our general public has been tardy to accord him. B. B.

## A LOUIS XVI CYLINDER-DESK

A MAGNIFICENT example of French eighteenth-century furniture in the Louis XVI style, a cylinder-desk<sup>1</sup> bearing the royal arms of France, has been presented to the Museum by Jacques Seligmann of Paris, "In memory of Mr. J. P. Morgan, and as a souvenir of the help which the Americans have given to France during the war." In every way this splendid desk of mahogany and ebony, richly decorated with ormolu mounts, is a piece of capital importance. The Bourbon lilies surmounted by the royal crown, which appear in a cartouche upon the front and back of the desk, would seem to indicate that it was made for the king, that is to say, for Louis XVI, as the style of the desk is clearly that of his reign. It is a *bureau du roi* which yields to none in beauty and interest.

The desk formed part of the Murray Scott Collection, bequeathed to Lady Sackville, from whom the collection was acquired in 1914 by Jacques Seligmann. Sir Murray Scott inherited his collection from the widow of Sir Richard Wallace, whose secretary he had been. Sir Richard Wallace in turn inherited the larger part of the famous collection which is known by his name, from the fourth Marquess of Hertford. This celebrated connoisseur, in the first part of the nineteenth century,

<sup>1</sup>Acc. No. 19.46.

formed a marvelous collection of works of art, which he housed in his Paris residence on the rue Laffitte and in the château of Bagatelle, which he purchased in 1832. After this collection passed into the possession of his half-brother, Sir Richard Wal-

The question naturally arises: was the Seligmann desk originally acquired by Sir Murray Scott, by Sir Richard Wallace, or by the Marquess of Hertford? In the absence of records, this question can not be answered with certainty, but the prob-



THE VILLAGE GIRLS (DETAIL)  
BY GUSTAVE COURBET

lace, part of it was removed to London and installed in Hertford House. In 1897, seven years after her husband's death, the London collection was bequeathed to the British nation by Lady Wallace. That part of the collection which had never been moved from Paris, Lady Wallace bequeathed to Murray Scott, who in turn left it to Lady Sackville.

abilities are that this honor must be accorded to the Marquess of Hertford. It is hardly likely that any piece of French furniture of the importance of this desk, which is here published for the first time, could have been acquired in comparatively recent times without the fact being widely known among those interested. Furthermore, the desk with its elaborate metal